

Supervisor's Guide to the IB Extended Essay

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This guide is designed to give supervisors a brief outline of the Extended Essay and the supervisor's role in that process. For a more detailed description, and assessment criteria, go to the following website:

<http://users.bergen.org/ricwee/EE/home.htm>



BERGEN COUNTY ACADEMIES

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The Extended Essay:

The extended essay is a research paper with a maximum length of 4000 words that lets the IB student investigate a topic of special interest and practice independent research and writing skills.

The essay should be one that is not just a reporting of information, but an analysis of a topic supported with relevant research. This essay is a requirement for the IB Diploma program, and it cannot have been submitted for credit in any class. The topic of the Extended Essay does not have to be one that the student intends to major in.

Responsibilities of the Supervisor:

Each student should work with a supervisor in the process of writing the Extended Essay. The supervisor has these principal responsibilities:

- Encourage and support the student throughout the research and writing of the essay
- Provide advice and guidance in the skills of undertaking research
- Help the student choose the most appropriate subject for the essay, and advise the student on how to keep the essay compliant to the assessment criteria
- Ensure that the extended essay is the student's own work
- Read the student's draft to offer feedback regarding ideas and effectiveness
- Complete the supervisor's report
- Provide the Extended Essay supervisor with a predicted grade for the essay after the final draft has been submitted

The supervisor supports the student by offering advice and guidance on the following aspects of the Extended Essay, as well as any other aspects that may come up:

- Finding a suitable focus
- Formulating a precise research question
- Finding appropriate resources
- How to gather and analyze information/evidence/data
- Documenting sources
- Writing an abstract.

The amount of time a supervisor spends with each student will usually be between two and three hours in total. The student should spend about four hours in total with the supervisor on the extended essay. By monitoring the progress of the essay through various steps, the supervisor can help to ensure that the extended essay is the student's own work. If the supervisor suspects

that plagiarism has occurred, he/she must write a full report. The supervisor should present this report to the Extended Essay coordinator who will then follow the appropriate procedures.

The supervisor is encouraged to discuss the choice of topic and research question with the student, but it is ultimately the student's responsibility to decide what topic to pursue. The supervisor is encouraged to read and comment on the any initial drafts of the extended essay, **but the supervisor may not edit any drafts for the student.** It is the student's responsibility to correct mistakes and verify the accuracy of the contents of the extended essay. It may be helpful for the student as well as the supervisor to review the general assessment criteria as well as the subject criteria to make sure all criteria are covered in the Essay. The supervisor is also responsible for ensuring that a completed extended essay cover accompanies the final version of the extended essay.

GENERAL GUIDELINES for completing the Extended Essay

The Nature of the Extended Essay

The extended essay is an in-depth study of a limited topic within a subject. Students will need to engage in personal research, communicate analyses in a logical and coherent manner, and format the final draft in compliance with IB guidelines.

The Choice of Subject

The list of available subjects is as follows:

- World religions
- Visual arts
- Theatre arts
- Social anthropology
- Psychology
- Politics
- Physics
- Philosophy
- Peace and conflict studies
- Music
- Mathematics
- Information technology in a global society
- History
- History of the Islamic world
- Geography
- Environmental systems
- Economics
- Design technology
- Computer science
- Classical Greek and Latin
- Chemistry
- Business and organization
- Biology
- Foreign language
- English/Literature

It is advisable to choose the subject for the extended essay before deciding what the topic or research question of the extended essay will be.

Preparing the Essay

The Choice of Topic

The topic of the extended essay is a particular area of study within the chosen subject. The student should choose a topic that is both of personal interest as well as one that offers a

challenge in its analysis. The topic should be limited and sufficiently focused to allow the student to examine it in depth. Students are not expected to provide a groundbreaking contribution to the subject.

A broad topic is unlikely to result in a successful extended essay. A topic that requires little research, or requires an essentially narrative or descriptive approach, is not suitable. When it comes to research, **primary resources** are key. A small amount of secondary sources may occasionally be necessary, but an extended essay that provides only summaries of primary resources (secondary sources, and so on), will not be successful.

The Research Question

When an appropriate topic has been chosen, the student should develop a specific research question by narrowing down farther to a specific focus. This research question must be put in the form of a question. Referring back to this research question can help the student maintain focus throughout the essay.

The research question should be challenging and leading towards analysis, but focused to ensure that it can be explored within the constraints of essay length, the time available to the student, as well as researchable.

The Research and Writing Process

Students will be following the steps below in the process of doing their Extended Essay requirement. Following each step is the deadline by which each step should be completed:

- The student should choose a subject and a topic to research—this may involve meeting with a potential supervisor, but the teacher will not be an official supervisor until the student can provide a specific research question and some initial research (**by January of the student's junior year**)
- The student should do initial research within that topic to focus it to a specific research question – once a student provides a specified research question and initial research, the teacher may then agree to be the supervisor of that project (**by February of the student's junior year**)
- The student then continues with the research and develop and outline of the overall analysis and argument, indicating where research will come into play (**by the end of March of the student's junior year**)
- The student revises the outline with advice from the supervisor (**by June of the student's junior year**)
- The student completes a full rough draft of the Extended Essay (**due at the beginning of the student's senior year**)
- Using advice from the supervisor as well as IB materials on the format of the Extended Essay, the student submits a final draft of the Extended Essay to the supervisor, who in turn submits it to the Extended Essay Coordinator (**January of the student's senior year**)

Organizing the Essay

Introduction

The introduction should include:

- Why the topic chosen is interesting, important or worthy of study
- Some background information to place the topic in an appropriate context
- Whether the topic has been narrowed to a focus of more manageable proportions
- A clearly and precisely stated research question
- A clear concluding statement of the thesis and argument, i.e. the response to the research question that will subsequently be developed in the body of the essay.

Body/Development

The essential feature of the essay (the body) is the development of a well-argued and supported answer to the research question. The argument may be broken down into sections, if helpful, into subsections.

Conclusion

The requirements of the conclusion:

- It is clearly stated
- It is relevant to the research question being investigated
- It is substantiated by the evidence presented
- It indicates issues, unresolved questions and new questions that have emerged from the research.

Formal Presentation

The extended essay should be written in a clear, correct and formal style. The final draft, of course, must be typewritten.

The Length of the Extended Essay

The upper limit for all extended essays is 4000 words. This upper limit includes the introduction, the body, the conclusion and any quotations, but does **not** include: the abstract; acknowledgements; the contents page; maps, charts, diagrams, annotated illustrations and tables; the references/bibliography; appendices.

Essays in excess of 4000 words are subject to penalties and examiners are not required to read material in excess of the word limit.

Title

The title should provide a clear indication of the focus of the essay. It should be precise, and it does not need to be phrased in the form of a question.

Abstract

The abstract presents a synopsis of the extended essay, and it must not exceed 300 words. It appears right after the title page of the final draft.

The abstract is intended to encourage students to examine the development of their arguments and the pertinence of their conclusions. It provides readers with a quick synopsis of the Extended Essay.

The abstract must include:

- The research question being investigated
- The scope of the investigation
- The conclusion/s of the extended essay.

Contents Page

The contents of the essay should be listed by page number. An index is not required.

Illustrations

Any illustrative material, if included, must be necessary and effective. Graphs, diagrams, tables and maps are effective only if they are well labeled and can be interpreted with ease. The use of photographs and postcards is acceptable only if they are captioned and/or annotated and are used to illustrate a specific point made in the extended essay.

References/Bibliography

The direct or indirect use of resources must be acknowledged appropriately. Failure to do so will be viewed as plagiarism.

The bibliography or list of references should include only works that the student has consulted. No particular referencing format is required (MLA, APA, etc.), but the format must be consistent. Each work consulted, regardless of whether or not it has been cited as a reference, must be listed in the bibliography.

Appendices

Appendices are not an essential section of the Extended Essay, and examiners are not required to read them, so care should be taken to include all information of direct relevance to the analysis and argument in the main part of the essay. Unless considered essential, complete lists of raw data should not be included in the extended essay. An Extended Essay should not constantly refer to material presented in an appendix as this may disrupt its continuity.

The Use of Other Media and Materials

Apart from graphic material, materials in other media may be submitted only as supporting appendices and should not detract from the written Extended Essay.

Videotapes

The use of videotapes as supporting material is **not** permissible.

Audiotapes

The use of audiotapes as supporting material is permissible, but is not encouraged, and extra merit will not be given for the inclusion of audiotapes in support of an extended essay. Digital audiotapes are **not** acceptable.

ASSESSMENT OF EXTENDED ESSAYS

Use of Assessment Criteria

Examiners appointed by the IBO externally assess all extended essays. All extended essays are marked on a scale from 0 to 36. Criterion levels will be awarded to each extended essay using a **best match model**. For each criterion, examiners are instructed to identify the level descriptor that is most appropriate (i.e. the best match) for the extended essay under consideration, rather than to progress upwards through the levels until the essay fails to meet one or more aspects of the descriptor.

Assessment Criteria

All Extended Essays are marked by the same general assessment criteria, but different subject areas have different expectations when it comes to the handling of a topic. Check on IBO Extended Essay guide for expectations in those particular subject areas. An extended essay that is inappropriate to the subject in which it is submitted will not score well in certain areas of the criteria.

Inappropriate Research Questions

Some research questions are too broad in scope to be dealt with effectively, or too vague to develop on more than a superficial descriptive level. Many examples of such research questions are given in the subject guidelines.

The other kind of inappropriate research question is one that is too simplistic, too limited in scope or too speculative, providing either an easily accomplished or insignificant outcome, or a self-evident outcome. Here are some examples of research questions that are either too narrow in focus, too broad, or don't invite analysis:

Biology *What causes genetic diseases?*

Computer science *How to buy a CD using the Internet.*

Environmental systems *The annual net productivity of a pet gerbil.*

Geography *The potato – areas of cultivation and the uses of the potato.*

Geography *Does Sydney have a central business district?*

History *Why did the Emperor Claudius have a limp?*

Theatre arts *An investigation into whether stage lighting has an effect.*

Overall Assessment

The total score will be used to determine in which of the following bands the extended essay is placed. This band, in conjunction with the band for Theory of Knowledge, determines the diploma points awarded for these two requirements.

See *Award of Diploma Points* (in the Extended Essay manual) for further details.

The band descriptions are:

A Work of an excellent standard

B Work of a good standard

C Work of a satisfactory standard

D Work of a mediocre standard

E Work of an elementary standard

The band description provides the basis of reporting back to schools on each candidate's performance in the extended essay requirement.

Award of Diploma Points

The Extended Essay, along with the Theory of Knowledge assignment, contribute diploma points for the student. A maximum of three points are awarded according to a candidate's combined performance in both the extended essay and Theory of Knowledge.

The total number of points awarded is determined by the combination of the performance levels achieved by the candidate in both the extended essay and Theory of Knowledge according to the matrix available in the IB Extended Essay manual.

All Criteria and further information are available in the Extended Essay manual.